

CITY OF BELMONT

PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION MINUTES

TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 2008, 7:00 PM

Chair Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at One Twin Pines Lane, City Hall Council Chambers.

1. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Parsons, Frautschi, Horton, Mayer, McKenzie, Mercer, Reed
Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: Community Development Director de Melo (CDD), City Attorney Zafferano (CA), Recording Secretary Flores (RS)

Chair Parsons acknowledged a Notre Dame de Namur student in the audience who had expressed an interest in learning about the Planning process.

2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS - None

3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments) - None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

4A. Minutes of March 4, 2008

MOTION: By Vice Chair Frautschi, seconded by Commissioner McKenzie, to approve the Minutes of Tuesday, March 4, 2008, with corrections he had provided to RS Flores.

Ayes: Frautschi, McKenzie, Horton, Parsons
Noes: None
Abstain: Mayer, Mercer, Reed

Motion passed 4/0/3

5. OLD BUSINESS

5A. Request for Extension of Approval – 1519 Ridge Road

CDD de Melo summarized the staff memorandum, recommending extension of the entitlement to 3/6/2009, with the understanding that the applicant could be pulling permits within the next few weeks.

MOTION: By Commissioner McKenzie, seconded by Commissioner Mayer, adopting the Resolution approving the Extension of a Single-Family Design Review for 1519 Ridge Road (Appl. No. 2008-2009) and attached conditions that apply.

Ayes: McKenzie, Mayer, Horton, Mercer, Reed, Frautschi, Parsons
Noes: None
Motion passed 7/0

Chair Parsons announced that this item may be appealed to the City Council within 10 calendar days.

6. STUDY SESSION:

6A. 1300 El Camino Real – Mixed-Use Development

CDD de Melo summarized the staff memorandum, referring to the overhead plans as appropriate and seeking questions, comments and feedback from the Commission prior to preparation of a more comprehensive staff report for the formal entitlements. He answered questions from the Commission regarding access to Civic Lane, changes that had been made to the façade, relocation of the Center for Independence of the Disabled, retention of the old firehouse, the possibility of underground hazards, setbacks, possible traffic impacts on O'Neill Avenue, screening of the equipment on the roof, square footage of the retail space, and allocation of parking spaces.

Commissioners' suggestions and requests for further information at the next review were as follows:

Commissioner Mayer:

- The structure is topped with a flat monolithic look, which did not seem to him to match the rest of the design.

Commissioner Mercer:

- Would like to have seen the RDA plans for the entire block as a cohesive vision with a comprehensive study of total parking needs and total density before final approval of this project. Felt that they have the "cart before the horse."
- Wants to see a rendition of the adjacencies of the old firehouse and the new building. She asked to be provided with plots and footprints at the very least, and possibly a line sketch of the elevations.

Vice Chair Frautschi:

- Would like the applicant to provide a visual interface plan with the view from O'Neill.
- Wants to see Walter Levison's recommendations about the removal of the Sequoia tree, because it is being affected by this project.
- Would like to see a rendering of the façade as viewed from across the street at the old Sunshine Café, which is the view where real bulk impact is going to be.
- He recommended that they step back the penthouse on the 4th floor level and then incorporate a larger deck.
- Recommended that they look at including photovoltaic on the penthouse roof.
- Felt that with very little effort they could incorporate some sort of design areas on the back elevation at the center portion of the building where all the flat roofs are located.
- Would like the allocation and security of parking spaces clarified.
- Suggested that on the El Camino elevation, where the huge monolith and staircase are located, they might incorporate larger windows at street level.

Commissioner Horton:

- Did not agree that they have the cart before the horse, but rather that the horse is pulling the cart and that they should be thankful that they have an applicant who is willing to go out ahead of the game and actually put a stake in the ground and be the leader.
- Suggested that an easy and inexpensive thing to do along the flat portion on Civic Lane would be to add some awnings.

Commissioner Mercer:

- Concerned about the bulk, and suggested that the stairwell be stuck back or that the 4th floor be stuck back from El Camino. Also concerned that if this project sets the standard for the rest of the block – if the entire block becomes 3-4 stories tall right out to the sidewalk it would become much more of a bulky mass. Encouraged the applicant to do a little bit more, particularly on the southeast corner where the stair tower is and where the penthouse goes all the way up the southeast wall.

Chair Parsons:

- Would like to see the frontal elevations of the project they had previously approved so they can look at the details, since there have been some changes, particularly where the stairwell is located.

- Would like to see more detail in the alleyway.
- Believes the project is going in the right direction and encouraged the applicant to return with the formal submittal as soon as possible.

CDD de Melo thanked Commissioners for their input and will forward their suggestions and comments to the applicant so that these details can be incorporated into their future plans.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

7A. PUBLIC HEARING – 1301 Ralston Avenue

To consider a Conditional Use Permit request to amend the Conditions of Approval for Planning Commission Resolution 1988-2 (Detailed Development Plan, Conditional Use Permit, Design Review) to allow the property owner to merge three existing lots into two lots instead of one single lot. This project request does not include any modifications to the existing senior care facility. (Appl. No. PA 2007-0062)

APN's: 045-190-040, 045-190-030 & 045-170-010;

Zoning: PD – Planned Development

CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15301

Applicant: Joel Roos and PAMI PCC, Inc.; Owner: RV California, LP

Project Planner: Jennifer Walker, (650) 595-7453

CDD de Melo reported that this hearing has been cancelled. Staff had received some additional information on the project and the previous entitlements that caused them to recommend that this item be continued. Staff had already spoken to the project applicant and they are aware of the concerns, questions or issues relative to the project and what they are seeking in their entitlement.

MOTION: By Commissioner Mercer, seconded by Commissioner Reed, to continue the project at 1301 Ralston Avenue (Appl. No. 2007-0062) to a date to be determined.

Ayes: Mercer, Reed, Mayer, McKenzie, Frautschi, Parsons

Noes: None

Recused: Horton

Motion passed 6/0/1

8. REPORTS, STUDIES AND UPDATES

CDD de Melo reported as follows:

8C. NDNU (Koret) Athletic Field

Commissioners Horton and Mercer were recused and left the room.

The City's hired acoustical consultant took noise readings at the lacrosse game on Saturday, March 29th, and will be doing readings again at the last game of the season on April 12th.

8E. Charles Armstrong School – 1405 Solana Drive

Commissioner Mayer was recused and left the room.

A tentative date of April 15th has been set to meet with members of the Charles Armstrong School Board. It is expected that they will talk about landscaping, future opportunities for CAS and repair of relations between the neighborhood and the school.

8D. Mid Peninsula Water District - Folger Drive

Vice Chair Frautschi was recused and left the room.

A revised Landscape Plan had been received that day. It included fewer trees but more spaced out consistent with the Commission direction, as well as some additional shrubs. He will bring it to the Commission at an upcoming meeting.

8A. 500 Block – El Camino Real (East Side)

CA Zafferano stated that at the last report the City was going to pursue civil enforcement remedies against the property owner. They are in the process of getting that drafted and letting the property owner know

that they should notify their insurance carrier as well as the carrier for the tree trimming company, both of whom will be named in any upcoming civil suit if it goes to that point.

8B. Motel 6 – 1101 Shoreway Road

Nothing new to report. He is keeping this on the agenda in case there are any new issues related to security. No change over the last two weeks.

8F. Ralston/US-101 Landscape Project

He received a phone call from CalTrans architect. They have been having a bit of difficulty making headway with CalTrans.

8G. Distribution of March 25, 2008 Priority Calendar Report – City Council

He reviewed the Staff Report that had been presented to City Council at their March 25th meeting, wherein current and below-the-line projects were ranked by Department, and stated that a Staff Report was currently in draft form that will be going to Council for their meeting on Tuesday April 8th that describes where the individual departments are drawing the line in terms of what projects they will be agreeing to take on over the next calendar year. Community Development staff will be taking on the Tree Ordinance Project and the Refinement of the San Juan Hills and Western Hills Floor Area Transfer Policy. He answered questions from the Commission regarding grant applications and the Silver Access Ordinance.

Commissioner Horton suggested that when traffic studies are done they do them with the knowledge of Belmont traffic patterns, particularly noting that a very different kind of traffic occurs in Belmont that is generated by educational institutions during certain hours and then by businesses at a much later hour, because they are high-tech businesses and are not the standard 9-5 businesses. Chair Parsons added that they should not do traffic studies when schools are on recess.

8H. Election of Chair & Vice Chair

Commissioner Horton nominated Chair Parsons to continue as Chair.

The following is a verbatim transcript of a statement read into the record by Commission McKenzie:

Commissioner McKenzie: "I would like to make a statement. I believe a change would be healthy for this Commission. I think the leadership hasn't changed in years. At the same time I appreciate the time and dedication of our current leaders and I thank them for their sacrifices and contributions. Other Commissioners have also put in long hours and are highly qualified people but maybe they don't have as much experience. Experience is relative. There are other equally valuable traits to be considered. I believe that we need to become a more progressive body with new ideas and new energy; a Commission that encourages rather than discourages; one that welcomes challenging new projects. I would like to see another Commissioner step forward and lead us in a positive direction at this most important time in Belmont's development. At the last Commission meeting there was a lot of consternation expressed about the approval of a very difficult residential project. This was a challenging project that did take more time than most projects do. It will in the final analysis also be an asset to the community. I believe the approval of this project by the Commission reflects that most members desire to work with fellow citizens who come before the Commission. We need to reinforce that Belmont is a good place to buy or to improve a home. We need to encourage visionary and/or challenging projects and applications that at the end of the day can make Belmont a better place for all of our citizens. Whether or not there is a change enacted through nominations tonight, I wanted to express my feelings about the potential of this Commission to encourage or discourage present and future projects through the face that it projects to the community. I for one welcome and support positive change. Change can invigorate the whole process."

Commissioner McKenzie nominated Commissioner Horton to be Chair of the Commission, adding that she had been Vice Chairman and is a strong person with much experience to contribute, and that he felt she would put a very positive face on the Commission.

Chair Parsons asked if there were any other nominations.

Commissioner Mayer stated that he appreciated the time that Commissioner Parsons has spent as Chair, but concurred with Commissioner McKenzie that change and rotation might be a useful thing, and that on those grounds alone felt that this is something Commissioners should think about and consider. He added that however the vote comes out he was sure the Commission will move ahead successfully and positively.

Vice Chair Frautschi did not agree that change for the sake of change is necessarily good or bad and disagreed with Commissioner McKenzie that change would put a more positive face than what is already on the Commission. He felt that Chair Parsons has done a good job, that the purpose of the Chair is to conduct an efficient meeting and spend time with staff to prepare an agenda. He did not feel it is the Commissioners' jobs to encourage or discourage development – it's their job to listen to the projects and vote on them by the rules.

Commissioner Horton commented that while she is flattered, she has a full time job, and does not work close to Belmont and could not come to meetings in the middle of the day.

Commissioner McKenzie added that he wanted to go on record as saying that he was very embarrassed at the Commission's treatment of the Hallmark project at the last meeting, and felt that that did not put a good face to the public. He felt it discourages people and could cause them to be reluctant to come before the Commission on public television to be berated.

Vice Chair Frautschi disagreed that they were berated.

Commissioner Horton declined the nomination, restating that she could not commit the required amount of time to the job.

There were no other nominations for Chairman.

Votes to elect Chair Parsons as Chairman of the Planning Commission:

Ayes: Horton, Mayer, Mercer, Reed, Frautschi, Parsons

Noes: McKenzie

Chair Parsons elected by a vote of 6/1.

Commissioner Mayer nominated Commissioner Horton as Vice Chair.

Commissioner Horton nominated Commissioner Mayer, who respectfully declined the nomination.

Chair Parsons nominated Commissioner Mercer, who respectfully declined the nomination.

Votes to elect Commissioner Horton as Vice Chair of the Planning Commission:

Ayes: Mayer, Horton, McKenzie, Mercer, Reed, Frautschi, Parsons

Noes: None

Commissioner Horton elected by a vote of 7/0

8I. Potential Joint City Council/Planning Commission Meeting – April 29, 2008

CDD de Melo reported that a potential joint City Council/ Planning Commission meeting is being discussed. A draft agenda will be developed that would allow for interplay between Commissioners and Council on various topics related to Commission activities. All Commissioners with the exception of Commissioner McKenzie, who will be traveling, will be available.

Additional Items

Commissioner Horton invited her fellow Commissioners to attend the Redwood City Forum meeting in Redwood City the following evening. Topic will be General Plan review, with a retired Principal Planner from County of Santa Clara as the speaker. The group meets on the first Wednesday of every month.

Commissioner Mercer reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission would also be meeting on the following evening, and that McDougal Park is on their agenda.

Vice Chair Frautschi reported that all residents of Arbor Avenue have signed a petition to the City Council requesting speed bumps. He stated that Public Works did a traffic study when the Catholic institutions were on Easter break and the Mid Peninsula Water District had two full blocks of Notre Dame Avenue torn up so that cars could not drive through the area. He wanted staff to pass along that the study was not at all valid.

CDD de Melo reported that the condominium conversion project at 1000 South Road had received approvals by the City Council. A Detailed Development Plan will be prepared for the Commission in about 90 days.

CDD de Melo reported that the first meeting of the new Green Advisory Committee had been scheduled for April 17th at 5 p.m. in the EOC room. Food will be served and the meeting is open to the public.

9. CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2008

Liaison: Commissioner Frautschi
Alternate Liaison: Commissioner Horton

9. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m. to a Regular Planning Commission Meeting on Tuesday, April 15, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in Belmont City Hall.

Carlos de Melo
Planning Commission Secretary

CD's of Planning Commission Meetings are available in the
Community Development Department.

Please call (650) 595-7416 to schedule an appointment.